

# ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

Memory states of a multi-bit memory cell are demarcated by generating read reference signals having levels that constitute boundaries of the memory states. The read reference signals may be dependent upon the levels of programming reference signals used for controlling the programming of the memory cell. The memory cell can thus be programmed without reading out its memory state during the programming process, with programming margins being assured by the dependence of the read reference signals on the programming reference signals. Both sets of reference signals may be generated by reference cells which track variations in the operating characteristics of the memory cell with changes in conditions, such as temperature and system voltages, to enhance the reliability of memory programming and readout.